



Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
CHARLES H. BRONSON, Commissioner
The Capitol • Tallahassee, FL 32399-0800
www.doacs.state.fl.us

Please Respond to:

Dear Consumer Advocate:

The use of portable generators in Florida has risen dramatically and I am asking for your help in getting out a safety message to consumers. With hurricane season here, I believe it is critical that we educate the public about the proper placement and use of generators in order to avoid a tragedy.

Generators are very useful when the power is out or in remote areas where power is needed but they can also be hazardous. Every year there are reports of people dying in generator-related accidents, the majority due to carbon monoxide poisoning when generators are set up in enclosed or partially enclosed spaces.

There have been cases where people put their portable generators in the garage to prevent theft or weather damage. They falsely believed they would be safe if the garage door was left open. Unfortunately, the CO gas entered through the vents and filtrated throughout the home, killing the occupants.

There are also electrical and fire dangers when the devices are not operated properly. Despite warning labels, deaths associated with generators have spiked in recent years. There were 64 deaths in 2005 alone. Twenty-eight of the deaths occurred during four hurricanes: Dennis, Katrina, Rita and Wilma. These are preventable tragedies.

I have enclosed an example of the educational materials offered for free by the Consumer Product Safety Commission. I ask that you join me in the effort to get this information into the hands of consumers. To find out more about this public outreach effort log onto <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpsc/pub/pubs/468.html>. The CPSC has set up a special website to make it easy to order the brochures, posters, fact sheets and door hangers.

I appreciate your assistance in this important effort. Together, we can work to reduce these disturbing statistics and ensure a safe 2007.

Sincerely,

CHARLES H. BRONSON
COMMISSIONER OF AGRICULTURE



Florida Agriculture and Forest Products
\$87 Billion for Florida's Economy



CPSC Safety Alert

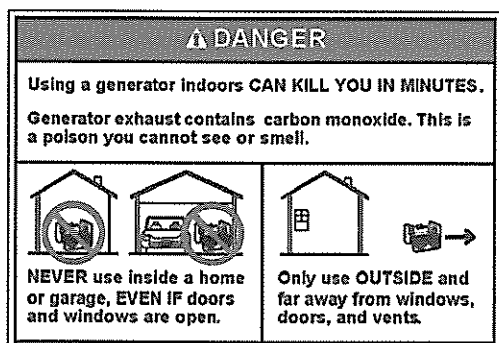
Portable Generator Hazards

Portable generators are useful when temporary or remote electric power is needed, but they also can be hazardous. The primary hazards to avoid when using a generator are carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning from the toxic engine exhaust, electric shock or electrocution, fire and burns.

Every year, people die in incidents related to portable generator use. Most of the incidents associated with portable generators reported to CPSC involve CO poisoning from generators used indoors or in partially-enclosed spaces.

Carbon Monoxide Hazards

When used in a confined space, generators can produce high levels of CO within minutes. When you use a portable generator, remember that you cannot see or smell CO. Even if you do not smell exhaust fumes, you may still be exposed to CO.



Danger labels are required on all portable generators manufactured or imported on or after May 14, 2007.

If you start to feel sick, dizzy, or weak while using a generator, get to fresh air **RIGHT AWAY**. **DO NOT DELAY**. The CO from generators can rapidly kill you.

Follow these safety tips to protect against CO poisoning.

- NEVER use a generator inside homes, garages, crawlspaces, sheds, or similar areas, even when using fans or opening doors and windows for ventilation. Deadly levels of carbon monoxide can quickly build up in these areas and can linger for hours, even after the generator has shut off.
- Follow the instructions that come with your generator. Locate the unit outdoors and far from doors, windows, and vents that could allow CO to come indoors.
- Install battery-operated CO alarms or plug-in CO alarms

To avoid CO poisoning when using generators:

- *Never run generators indoors, including garages, basements, crawlspaces and sheds.*
- *Get to fresh air right away if you start to feel dizzy or weak.*

with battery back-up in your home, according to the manufacturer's instructions. CO alarms should be certified to the requirements of the latest safety standards (UL 2034, IAS 6-96, or CSA 6.19.01). Test batteries monthly.

Electrical Hazards

- Generators pose a risk of shock and electrocution, especially if they are operated in wet conditions. If you must use a generator when it is wet outside, protect the generator from moisture to help avoid the shock/electrocution hazard, but do so without operating the generator indoors or near openings to any building that can be occupied in order to help avoid the CO hazard. Operate the generator under an open, canopy-like structure on a dry surface where water cannot reach it or puddle or drain under it. Dry your hands, if wet, before touching the generator.
- Connect appliances to the generator using heavy-duty extension cords that are specifically designed for outdoor use. Make sure the wattage rating for each cord exceeds the total wattage of all appliances connected to it. Use extension cords that are long enough to allow the generator to be placed outdoors and far away from windows, doors and vents to the home or to other structures that could be occupied. Check that the entire length of each cord is free of cuts or tears and that the plug has all three prongs. Protect the cord from getting pinched or crushed if it passes through a window or doorway.
- NEVER try to power the house wiring by plugging the generator into a wall outlet, a practice known as "backfeeding." This is extremely dangerous and presents an electrocution risk to utility workers and neighbors served by the same utility transformer. It also bypasses some of the built-in household circuit protection devices.

Fire Hazards

- Never store fuel for your generator in the home. Gasoline, propane, kerosene, and other flammable liquids should be stored outside of living areas in properly-labeled, non-glass safety containers. Do not store them near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater in a garage.
- Before refueling the generator, turn it off and let it cool down. Gasoline spilled on hot engine parts could ignite. 5123/0407

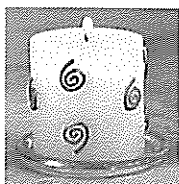
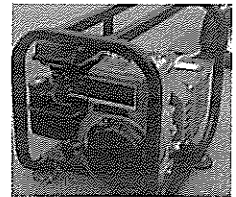


CPSC Safety Alert

Surviving the Aftermath of a Hurricane

Deadly dangers can exist after a natural disaster knocks out power or causes flooding. Here is some important safety information to keep in mind.

- Never use a portable generator indoors - including garages, basements, crawlspaces and sheds - even with ventilation. Exhaust fumes contain extremely high levels of carbon monoxide (CO) that can rapidly become deadly if inhaled.
- Only use a portable generator outdoors in a dry area away from doors, windows and vents that can allow CO to come indoors. Wait for the rain to pass before using a generator. Consumer-grade generators are not weatherproof and can pose the risk of electrocution and shock when used in wet conditions.
- If using a generator, plug individual appliances into heavy duty, outdoor-rated extension cords and plug the cords into the generator.
- Check that the extension cords have a wire gauge adequate for the appliance loads and have all three prongs, including a grounding pin.
- Never store gasoline in the home or near a fuel-burning appliance, such as a natural gas water heater, where gasoline fumes could be ignited.
- Never use charcoal indoors. Burning charcoal in an enclosed space can produce lethal levels of carbon monoxide.
- Make sure the batteries in your smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm are working.
- Do not use electric or gas appliances that have been wet or damaged because of the hazards of electric shock, fire, or explosion.



- Exercise caution when using candles. Use flashlights instead. If you must use candles, do not burn them on or near anything that can catch fire. Never leave burning candles unattended. Extinguish candles when you leave the room.

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